

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /099 W

-----031179 011732Z /46

R 011424Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4218

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY DUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 4891

ALEXANDRIA FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, ET, US

SUBJ: ERITREAN DIALOGUE

REF: STATE 100281, 115490, 106788

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SUMMARY: AT REQUEST OF PLF REP. SABBE TRANSMITTED BY SOMALIAN

AMBASSADOR, EMBOFF MET SABBE AUGUST 1 INFORMALLY AND

UNOFFICIALLY. SABBE VOLUNTEERED THAT AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

PERIOD WAS CRITICAL FOR ERITREAN STRUGGLE SINCE SOVIETS

ARE SEEKING TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POSTITION IN ETHIOPIA BY

NEGOTIATION PACT BETWEEN DIRG AND ERITREAN POPULAR FRONT

WHICH WOULD ISOLATE ELF/PLF. TO STOP SOVIET MACHINATIONS, ELF/PLF NEED MATERIAL AND MORAL HELP NOW, PARTICULARLY FROM SAUDI ARABIA (MATERIAL) AND FRANCOPHONE AFRICA (MORAL), EMBOFF REPEATED USG POSTITION (STATE 100281). SABBE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD US RELUCTANCE BUT IN ANY CASE WANTED TO ASK FOR INDIRECT HELP THROUGH FOLLOWING STEPS:

A. INDICATE TO SAG US CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET ROLE IN ETHIOPIA AND INCOURAGE ANY SAG ACTION WHICH MIGHT CHECK SOVIET MOVES; B. INDICATE TO FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES OF AFRICA THAT US WOULD NOT STAND IN WAY OF INSCRIBING ERITREAN ISSUE ON UNGA AGENDA AND C. PERMIT USUN OFFICER TO MEET WITH ERITREAN REPS. END SUMMARY

SOMALI AMBASSADOR CONTACTED AMBASSADOR JULY 31 TO CONVEY REQUEST OF ELF/PLF REP. OSMAN SLAAH SABBE FOR MEETING. BASED ON DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE RE MEETING WITH ERITREANS, AMBASSADOR AGREED TO DISCREET, INFORMAL AND UNOFFICIAL MEETING BETWEEN SABBE AND AN EMBASSY OFFICER. CONSEQUENTLY, POLOFF WALKER MET WITH SABBE AUGUST 1 IN COFFEE SHOP OF SEMIRAMIS HOTEL.

2. SABBE EXPLAINED THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN ERITREA IN NEXT FEW MONTHS WOULD BE CRITICAL. ERITREAN POPULAR FRONT (EPF) HAD HELD MEETING WITH DIRG IN ROME IN JUNE WITH SOVIETS AS MEDIATORS. SECOND MEETING WAS HELD IN LEBANON IN JULY
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WITHOUT SOVIETS. SABBE SAID HE BELIEVED LEBANESE SECURITY WAS AWARE OF THE DETAILS OF THIS MEETING. SOVIET OBJECTIVE WAS TO DEVELOP COMPROMISE BETWEEN EPF AND DIRG WHICH WOULD ISOLATE OTHER ERITREAN FORCES AND GUARANTEE SOVIET PRESENCE IN AREA. SABBE SAID HE FEARED SECRET AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED SINCE PF PERFORMANCE IN FIGHTING RECENTLY WAS SUSPECT. HE ADDED THAT HE DID NOT DISCOUNT POSSIBILITY OF FUTURE DIRECT CUBAN INVOLVEMENT.

3. AS FOR PLOF/ELF, SABBE SAID THAT ELF WAS NOW CONSIDERING THE MERGER WITH PLF THAT HAD BEEN MENTIONED IN JOINT COMMUNIQUE REPORTED JULY 28 BY SUNA (KHARTOUM 2514). SABBE SAID HE HOPED MERGER WOULD BE CONCLUDED WITHOUT NEED FOR CONVENING UNIFICATION CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD TAKE TOO MUCH TIME. HE SUGGESTED THAT IF UNITY WERE FORGED AND ELF/PLF WERE SEEN TO BE STRONG, BOTH IN WEAPONS AND IN INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT THAN EPF WOULD BE FORCED TO ABANDON CONSIDERATION OF A SEPARATE DEAL WITH THE DIRG AND THE SIVETSAND ANGOLA TYPE SITUATION COULD BE AVOIDED.

4. SABBE SAID THAT ELF/PLF WAS RECEIVING ARMS FROM IRAN AND HAD JUST RECEIVED PROMISE OF MATERIAL SUPPORT FROM

MOROCCO. TUNISIA HAD AGREED TO SEEK INSCRIPTION OF
ERITREAN ISSUE ON UNGA AGENDA. MORAL SUPPORT WAS COMING
FROM SOMALIA AND SUDAN AS WELL AS SYRIA, SAUDI ARABIA,
AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, SABBE ADDED NON-MARXIST
ERITREAN FORCES NEED A MAJOR INPUT OF MATERIAL SUPPORT NOW
DURING COMING CRITICAL PHASE. ERITREANS ARE LOOKING TO
SAUDI ARABIA TO PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT BUT SAUDIS HAVE NOT
TO DATE BEEN FORTHCOMING.

5. EMBOFF SAID HE UNDERSTOOD SABBE HAD BEEN IN TOUCH

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 /099 W

-----031268 011733Z /46

R 011424Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4219

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 4891

ALEXANDRIA FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

WITH US EMBASSIES IN ABU DHABI AND SAUDI ARABIA AND

DOUBTED THERE WAS ANYTHING ON USG POSITION WHICH SABBE HAD NOT HEARD BEFORE. EMBOFF EXPRESSED VIEWS CONTAINED IN STATE 100281 PARA 2. IN RESPONSE TO SABBE'S REITERATED CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET ROLE IN AREA, EMBOFF SAID USG WAS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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COURSE CONCERNED ABOUT PRESENT UNSTABLE SITUATION. US WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER DEFENSIVE ARMS ASSISTANCE FOR SUDAN AND IN PRINCIPLE FOR SOMALIA WAS EVIDENCE OF THIS CONCERN. HOWEVER, USG WAS OF FIRM CONVICTION THAT ANY US INVOLVEMENT IN ERITREAN PROBLEM WOULD NOT HELP RESOLVE THE CONFLICT.

6. SABBE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD USG'S RELUCTANCE TO BECOME DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN ERITREAN PROBLEM BUT ADDED THAT IN ANY CASE HE WANTED TO ASK IF US WOULD UNDERTAKE FOLLOWING INDIRECT ACTIONS:

A. INDICATE TO SAUDI ARABIA US INTEREST IN SEEING THAT SOVIET UNION DOES NOT GAIN PERMANENT FOOTHOLD IN ERITREA AND INDICATE THAT US WOULD WELCOME ANY SAUDI MOVES WHICH MIGHT COUNTER SOVIETS THERE.

B. INDICATE TO AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY IN FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES, THAT USG WOULD NOT STAND IN WAY OF INSCRIBING QUESTION OF ERITREA ON UNGA AGENDA.

C. OPEN WAY FOR EMBOFF AT USUN TO TALK TO ERITREAN REPS.

7. EMBOFF SAID HE COULD OFFER NO ENCOURAGEMENT ON THESE POINTS BUT WOULD REPORT CONVERSATION. ADDED THAT USG WOULD PROBABLY WANT TO KEEP SYRIAN GOVERNMENT INFORMED OF CONTACTS. SABBE SAID THIS WAS UNDERSTOOD AND ADDED HE HAD ON JULY 31 DISCUSSED SITUATION WITH SYRIAN BAATH PARTY AND ASKED PARTY TO USE GOOD OFFICES (SIC) TO ENCOURAGE USG SUPPORT. SABBE SAID HE WAS LEAVING FOR AWHILE BUT WOULD TRY TO CONTACT EMBOFF AGAIN IN ABOUT TWO WEEKS.

ACTION REQUESTED: AUTHORIZATION FOR EMBOFF TO INFORM SARG
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OF SUBSTANCE OF MEETING.
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1437456
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ERITREAN DIALOGUE
TAGS: MARR, PINT, ET, US, SY, IR, UR, ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT
To: STATE
Type: TE
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